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FRIDAY
NOVEMBER 6, 1953

Ricardo Sicre, head of World Commerce Corporation here, who shot one day with us and who was in OSS, took me this morning to an antique shop. He had handled in Washington in 1941 and 1942 delicate matters of penetrating neutral embassies and became an officer in the United States Army and subsequently an American citizen. Representing the Ryan interests, he has built up a substantial banking business and on behalf of the Spanish Government has taken in hand the foreign exchange problem. The value of the peseta has risen during the last year from 54 to the dollar to 42-1/2, and much of the success of the operation is attributed to Sicre.

His wife, Betty accompanied us. I had known her years ago as a sort of ward of Bill Stephenson, then head of British clandestine activities in the Western Hemisphere. Bill was a great friend of her Canadian father and mother, and my recollection is that she joined OSS after having been an amazingly efficient pilot in the Ferry Command that transported planes from the United States and Canada to Great Britain.

The establishment we visited is about to open publicly, and contains an astonishing collection of miscellaneous art objects, some of them, such as 16th and 17th century pottery and armor, of the highest quality mixed up with lots of pseudo-antiques. I bought for $100 a quaint painting on wood of an odd-looking 16th century Spaniard.

Most of the members of our party lunched at three p.m. at the Golf Club with the Cerveras. An attractiv place; it had served as headquarters for the Russian commander during the Civil War. This was one of the bitterest of all human conflicts - about a million Spaniards were killed during it, many under conditions of atrocious cruelty. They are tough, ruthless people with passionate convictions.

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We left the table at 5 p.m. I had a short talk with Nicky Biddle, who has continued to live in Madrid with his wife Anne (Bill Bullitt's daughter) since he left the Embassy after the expiration of Stanton Griffis' tenure. Nice fellow, Nicky, lean, looks a bit like a Spaniard but not hungry.

The contrasts between riches and poverty in this country are striking. Not that there are probably many extremely rich people, for I assume the great landowners, like our own pre-war Southerners, have more of the outward indicia of wealth than cold cash in their banks. But the overwhelming mass of the population is desperately poor and universally proud. With industrial wages at about 75 cents a day, and Heaven knows what the agricultural laborer receives, the subsistence level of most of the 27 million inhabitants is precarious. However, they do not seem to relish advice from foreigners. Every man here is an hidalgo and expects to be treated as such. I fancy that if one took too many liberties with them one would quickly receive a hot rebuke, and if that were not sufficient a touch of cold steel (for they are experts in knife play), or even a well-directed bullet.

This afternoon we shopped. On the whole, men's articles are cheap here and the handiwork superior. I bought a muffler, multi-toned and in size suitable for an elephant, some parti-coloured socks, and woolen neckties for shooting.

At seven Harry Higgins and Bill Price foregathered with me and Old Granddad to talk about United States tariffs and foreign economic policy. They think the present standard of living at home and the never-ceasing increase in nominal wages would make free trade, except on a selective basis, an impossibility for us, but, like myself, have no panacea to close the dollar gap.

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The hours for meals are quite intriguing. About eleven I had a piece of grilled veal - the best meat here - while my friends were going off to a cocktail party.

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SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 7, 1953

Eight o'clock congregation in the lobby. We motored out thirty kilometers beyond Toledo into harsh, barren country still seamed with Civil War trenches. This terrible internecine conflict is never long absent from conversations. Cervera, for example, lost fourteen close relatives, most of them by assassination.

John Lazear is an encyclopaedia on game bird and fish habits. He says that one of the ocean eels with long, deadly teeth can be killed in thirty seconds by pinning his head down with a bait box and then putting the lighted end of a cigarette in his opened mouth so that he must breathe the smoke.

The shooting today was mediocre as regarded the number of partridges seen. This particular area was being shot for the first time since 1939. We killed 117 partridges and a few hares. The Spaniard in one of the butts next to me, the Marques de Campo, made a double on a flock of lesser bustards - they are beautiful birds.

We had wine and sandwiches in the open for, as usual, it was a brilliant sunny day. About seven we motored into Toledo, that fascinating city, and washed at the Hotel del Cardinale, which was until two years ago a private house. The patio is splendid, it has only 8 or 10 rooms, and is [redacted]-romantic. We then motored about 25 kilometers from Toledo to de Campo's famous castle, which has been in his family for over six hundred years. It is a huge battlemented structure, with a drawbridge and moat, around which a village has sprouted. Everything movable in it was destroyed by the Republicans during the Civil War, but the eight-foot-thick walls were almost invulnerable to their fury. There were paintings around slashed to pieces, ~~and marbles with heads or arms removed~~ and smashed. Now it has been almost completely restored and refurbished with objects from another castle he formerly owned. He has ~~prepared a part of it~~ for paying guests, as is being done by a few other Spanish noblemen, ~~one duke~~

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near Toledo has turned his residence into a motel.

We had a fine dinner, with the rice and chicken that is such a characteristic and palatable dish, in a huge banqueting hall with quaintly frescoed walls, and some good bottles of red Rioja wine, a change from the Marques of Riscal that we have generally been served. There were lots of speeches (all, I must confess, from our group) and endless jollity.

The others are staying in Toledo for additional shooting, but I motored back after midnight with Maria Rosa Cervera and Mr. Curry of the U. S. economic mission. Got to bed around 3:00 a.m.

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